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Testimony in Support of Several Proposed Bills

Housing Committee

February 5, 2015

Senator Winfield, Representative Butler, Senator Hwang, Representative Kupchick, Senator Osten, Representative Rose and esteemed members of the Housing Committee.

I strongly support the Committee's initiative to foster a candid conversation about how we can enhance efforts to promote affordable housing across the state. 8-30g may be a controversial statute, but I think we can all agree on the core value of encouraging diversity in every community. The question should be: can we do an even better job in getting affordable units built?

With that goal in mind, there are a number of bills before the Committee which respect the integrity of 8-30g, but also seek to recognize the sincere efforts of municipalities to diversify their housing stock. Why so many bills which focus on incentives and credits? Because many municipalities have acted in good faith, pursued serious planning, created incentive housing zones, and even seen units built – but are still subject to the punitive aspects of 8-30g. They fall short of qualifying for a moratorium and feel abused rather than rewarded for their good efforts. Their frustration can actually be an impediment to remaining committed to the cause.

I ask you to consider HB 6145, introduced by Rep. Wood and me, which acknowledges a municipality's progress towards the goal with somewhat easier eligibility for a moratorium. HB 5802, introduced by Rep. Lavielle, also seeks to recognize steady progress toward the goal. HB 6128, introduced by the Fairfield/Trumbull delegation, is even more specific in defining the standards of good effort to achieve moratorium eligibility. All three bills are excellent starting grounds for determining a fair standard of intent.

I also particularly like HB 6140, introduced by Rep. Rojas, which requires a developer invoking 8-30g to post a bond which would be forfeit if the developer never builds affordable units. Such a requirement would discourage insincere operators who seek only to extort the municipality into undeserved concessions.

Lastly, I'm intrigued by the many bills which seek moratorium credit for senior or low cost or pre-existing affordable housing, because they reward municipalities which have demonstrated commitment to greater housing diversity in other worthy ways, which is particularly relevant to municipalities which are already densely developed and have little room left for new, large-scale, multi-unit housing projects.

Again, I thank the Committee for engaging in this important dialogue and look for to an honest appraisal of 8-30g's effectiveness and what we can do to further promote quality affordable housing in Connecticut.

Rep. Jonathan Steinberg, 13th District